



Urgent Opportunities in Wisconsin's Early Childhood Investments

Key findings from statewide conversations and surveys by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Prenatal to Five Initiative

Wisconsin is home to nearly 400,000 children under age five¹, and communities across the state have voiced consistent support for increased public investments in early childhood care and education priorities. COVID-19 and broader discussion of racial inequities in 2020 only intensified the urgency of these needs.

Based on "regional summit" community conversations² and stakeholder surveys from across the state, as well as ongoing relationships with a broad range of partners, researchers with the Prenatal to Five Initiative (P25) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison found:

Wisconsin families need more child care options:

- Prior to COVID-19, Wisconsin had just 57 child care slots for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers for every 100 children whose parents work outside the home.
- That figure worsened with COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, there were 166,052 slots. As of July 2020, there were 137,137 slots, a 17.4% decrease.

Wisconsin families need state-supported affordable and equitable child care options:

- In Wisconsin, married-couple families pay, on average, 13% of their income for child care.
- Single-parent families pay, on average, 34% of their income for child care.

¹ "Child population by age group in Wisconsin" (2019 figures), Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center.
² Prenatal to Five Regional Summit, 2019.
³ Paula Drew, "Impossible Choices," Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, July 6, 2020.
⁴ Prenatal to Five Initiative Regional Survey, 2020.



CHILD CARE SHORTAGES

Prior to COVID-19

57

slots for every 100 children

During COVID-19

-17.4%

child care slots

CHILD CARE COSTS

13%

of married-couple families' income (average)

34%

of single-parent families' income (average)

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Wisconsin child care providers need fair, livable pay and high-quality training:

- The average annual income of a Wisconsin child care worker is \$22,630, hovering just around the federal poverty level for a family of three.
- Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, there were 3,906 licensed providers. As of July 2020, there were 3,212 licensed providers, a 17.8% decrease.

Wisconsin child care providers need support:

Fully 100 percent of survey respondents said COVID-19 negatively affected their work, and 78 percent said racism negatively impacted their family or community:

- **“Every other sector relies on child care availability for parents to return to work.”**
– Paula Drew, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association³
- **“They say we’re essential... but without the financial assistance to safely operate, we feel utterly expendable.”**
– Wisconsin child care provider⁴
- **“We can’t get tired. We have to take rests for a short time including moments of self-care and then get back into the fight. Our children are waiting on us, counting on us.”**
– Wisconsin parent reflecting on impacts of racism

PARTNERS

Children’s museums

[Cooperative Education Service Agencies \(CESAs\)](#), Schools, Districts

Family foundations

Family resource centers

[Healthy Early](#)

[Kids Forward](#)

[Rooted](#)

[Supporting Families Together Association](#)

[United Way children’s network](#)

[UW–Madison Division of Extension](#)

[Wisconsin & UP Michigan State Alliance of YMCAs](#)

[Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program for Families](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Children and Families](#), including [YoungStar](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#), including the [Wisconsin WIC \(Women, Infants, and Children\) Program](#), and the [Maternal and Child Health Program](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

[Wisconsin Early Childhood Association](#)

ABOUT

The Prenatal to Five Initiative (P25) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison investigates and advances healthy early childhood development priorities across Wisconsin and beyond.

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CHILD CARE TRAINING

\$22,630

Average annual income for child care workers

-17.8%

licensed providers as of July 2020

COVID-19 AFFECTS

100%

said Covid-19 negatively affected their work

78%

said racism negatively impacted their community

“The earlier the investment, the greater the return.”



Prenatal to Five
SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON